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THE
SEN T I M E N T S

OF A

FOREIGNER,

ON THE

D I S P U T E S

OF

GREAT-BRITAIN WITH AMERICA.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

Venit summa dies et incluctabile tempus.

VIRG.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

GREAT-BRITAIN's unhappy disputes with the English American colonies claim and engage a large share of the public attention. The question seems to be, whether immense numbers of English subjects, living in remote regions, who have hitherto participated of the blessings of the English constitution, to which they are indisputably intitled, should be taxed by any man or what is the same thing any body of men, with respect to whom they have no right of election, no power of controul? This question hath been long agitated, within the walls of the Senate-house and without doors; in a variety of shapes, on a variety of grounds; with great acuteness and no little acrimony on all hands. A contest so important in its nature, so decisive in its consequences, must naturally warm or even inflame the minds of those who are interested in its fate. Every subject of the British empire who thinks or who feels must take a side. At such a crisis it cannot be impertinent to lay before the public the sentiments of a dispassionate foreigner on the subject. Of no party, he may be admitted as a fair umpire; and if qualified in other respects, if possessed of adequate abilities and information, his decision must have weight.

THESE considerations account for this little publication of an extract from *L'Historie philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*. A valuable work attributed to the Abbé Reynel; to whose authority a kind of sanction hath been given by its being quoted as to a certain point (if the news-papers are to be credited) by a noble Lord high in office. It would be hard

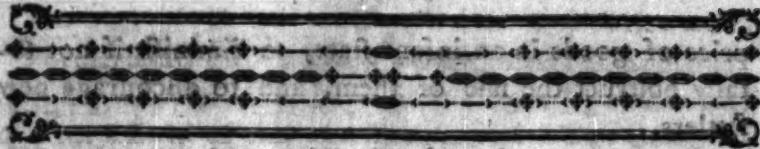
then to deny its weight in other matters equally within his competency. But authority is a dangerous thing ; truth needs not, disdains its protection ; its wings serve but to shelter error. Let principles, let facts, let argument speak.

THE writer along with uncommon talents is furnished with singular information. No possible measure of these however can be supposed totally to exempt a man from error. Some mistakes and inaccuracies will be found even in this short extract. They will be forgiven when it is considered that the author's situation is distant, and that the subject, copious and complicated in itself, is not singly and professedly discussed, but merely in the course of a large and comprehensive work. It was once intended to have pointed out a few instances of this sort which occur ; but as these must readily be detected by the attentive and intelligent reader, and as they do not affect the author's reasoning or conclusions, this was on second thoughts looked on as a superfluous labour. The translator hath contented himself with aiming at fidelity and exactness ; even so far as to imitate the manner of the original, which is in general short and sententious.

THE second edition, printed in 1773, has been made use of. It is scarce necessary to add that these observations were of course prior to the accumulated violences of the late Parliament. But it is easy to conjecture what the Abbé's sentiments must be with respect to these and some later proceedings, the political turpitude of which can only be equalled by their unexampled barbarity.

Dix meliora piis, erroreisque hostibus illum !

M A R C H 17. 1775.



S E N T I M E N T S

to consider all beyond an acquaintance about names
the USA, whose to suppose an undivided acquaintance

and acquaintance, at first sight no less than
the USA, whose to suppose an undivided acquaintance

and acquaintance, at first sight no less than
the USA, whose to suppose an undivided acquaintance

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F O R E I G N E R, &c.

THE first Colonists who peopled North-
America, devoted themselves, in the
beginning, entirely to agriculture. They soon perceived
that their exports did by no means enable them to pur-
chase what they stood in need of, and they found them-
selves obliged to attempt some coarse manufactures. This
innovation was thought to clash with the interests of the
mother-country. It was complained of to Parliament,
where it was discuss'd with all the attention it deserved.
There wanted not members bold enough to defend the
cause of the Colonists. They urged, that as the labour
of the fields could not give constant employment to the
inhabitants throughout the year, it would be rank ty-
ranny to force them to waste in inaction that portion
of their time, which the soil did not demand; that as
what they earned by agriculture and hunting was not
commensurate to their wants, to prevent their supply-
ing the deficiency by a new species of industry, was to
bind wretchedness upon them; in fine, that the prohi-
bition of manufactures had a direct tendency to raise the
price

price of goods in an infant state, to diminish if not totally obstruct the sale of them, and to discourage new settlers.

The evidence of these principles was incontrovertible. It prevailed after very warm debates. The Americans were permitted to manufacture their own cloathing, but under such restrictions, as betrayed the reluctance of an avaricious spirit thro' an exterior of equity. All communication in this respect amongst the provinces was severely interdicted. They were forbid, under heavy penalties, to send from one to another any kind of wool, either raw or wrought. Some manufacturers of hats however broke thro' these barriers. To put a stop to this terrible disorder, as it was called, Parliament had recourse to the expedient of regulations, at once little and cruel. No workman could exercise his trade till after an apprenticeship of seven years; no master was allowed to have more than two apprentices at a time, or to employ any slave in his work-house.

The mines of iron, which one would think might absolve men from all dependency, were subjected to restrictions still more severe. It could only be exported to the mother-country in the rude form of pigs or bars, without furnaces to cast, machines to mould, or sledges and anvils to forge it. The converting it into steel was yet more peremptorily prohibited.

Their importations were hampered with a variety of shackles. No foreign vessel, unless it be in evident danger of ship-wreck, or loaded with bullion, can enter any of the ports in North-America. Even English ships are not admitted if they come directly from a harbour of the nation. The merchantmen of the Colonies trading to Europe, must bring no commodities back with them, but what have been purchased from the capital, except the Wines of Madeira and the Azores; and what salt is necessary for the fisheries.

Formerly

Formerly all their exports were to touch at England. Weighty considerations have since disposed government to relax a little of this excessive rigour. The Colonies are now permitted to carry directly to the Southward of Capo-Finistere, grain, flour, rice, pulse, fruit, salt-fish, planks and timber. All their other products go exclusively to the mother-country. Even Ireland, which offer'd an advantageous out-let to the wheat, flax, and lumber of the Colonies, was shut up by an act of Parliament in 1766.

The Senate which represents the nation, insists on the right of directing commerce through all the vast extent of the British dominions. On this principle it assumes the power of regulating the connections between the capital and the Colonies, of maintaining a communication, a beneficial and reciprocal re-action, amongst the scattered parts of an immense empire. In fact, some one power ought to determine, in the last resort, on those relative circumstances which may injure or promote the general good of the whole system. Parliament alone can claim this transcendent prerogative. But Parliament should exercise it to the mutual advantage of all the members of the social confederacy. This maxim always inviolable, is peculiarly so in a state, the movements of which have been all instituted and adjusted, with a special view to national liberty.

But they departed from this great principle of impartiality, which alone can preserve an equality of independence among the members of a free government, when they obliged the Colonies to pour into the capital all their products, even those which were not to be consumed in it; when they forced them to take from the capital all their merchandize, even those which were brought into it from foreign nations. This imperious and sterile constraint, loading the sales and purchases of the Americans with useless charges, a mere dead loss,

which

which hath naturally and necessarily checked their activity, and of course hurt their circumstances; and it is purely to enrich some merchants or some brokers of the capital, that the rights and interests of the Colonies are sacrificed. Yet they owed nothing more to England for the protection she had afforded them, than a preference in the sale and importation of such of their commodities as she could consume; and in the purchase and exportation of such merchandises as she manufactured. Within this line the submission of the Colonies was grateful acknowledgement; beyond it every restraint was downright violence.

Accordingly, Contraband was the offspring of this tyranny. Transgression is the first effect of iniquitous laws, wherever despotism hath not trampled on codes, forms and tribunals; sole rampart, legitimate and sacred of that independency which is the birth-right of man. In vain were the Colonies told a hundred and a hundred times that smuggling was contrary to the fundamental principle of their establishment, to political wisdom, to the express intent of the laws. In vain was it proved in a variety of publications that the citizen who paid the duties was oppressed by the one who did not, and that the fraudulent trader robb'd the fair merchant, by disappointing him of his lawful profits. In vain were precautions multiplied to prevent, and chastisements to punish, such transgressions. The voice of interest, of reason, of equity, was an overmatch for the hundred mouths and the hundred paws of the revenue-hydra. Foreign commodities, smuggled into the northern parts of English-America, amounted to a full third of what paid the duties.

A freedom of trade undefined, or only restrained within just bounds, would put a stop to these illicit practices which excite such an outcry. Then would the Colonies attain that measure of affluence, which would enable them, not only to shake off the weight of four mil-

lions *Sterling*, which they owe the mother-country, but to take from her annually upwards of two millions worth of merchandizes, which their present consumption demands. But in place of this pleasing perspective, which should naturally arise out of the English constitution, by what fatality is it that a claim unwarrantable in a free state, hath carried under the harsh form of taxation into the centre of the Colonies, a root of trouble and dissension, perhaps a conflagration by no means so easily extinguished as lighted up?

England had just concluded a war, which might be called a universal one, in the course of which her fleets had hoisted the flag of victory in every sea, while her conquests had enlarged her dominions by an immense acquisition of territory, in both the Indies. This sudden and unexpected growth gave her a brilliancy in the eyes of other nations, which made envy and admiration speak, or astonished them into silence; yet within herself she was compelled to mourn incessantly over her splendid triumphs. Crush'd by the pressure of a debt of one hundred and forty eight millions, the interest of which amounted to four millions nine hundred and sixty three thousand four hundred and forty four pounds, with a revenue of ten millions she could scarcely provide for the current expences of the state; and this revenue, without a chance of increase, was in danger of sinking.

The Land-tax was rated higher than it had ever been in time of peace. New duties on Houses and Windows injured that kind of property; an augmentation of revenue on the registry of deeds, bore heavy on real estates. The veins of luxury had been exhausted by additional taxes on wrought plate, cards, dice, wine and ardent spirits. Nothing more could be expected from commerce, already loaded with duties in every port, to every port, on the merchandizes of the East, on the products of the West, on groceries, on mercery-wares, in a word, on all subjects

jects of ex---or importation, whether raw materials or manufactures. The curb of the Excise had happily check'd the abuse of spirituous liquors, but at the expence of the public revenue. A compensation had been look'd for from one of those resources which are readily found, but not safely sought, in the articles of general consumption and greatest necessity. The excise had laid hold of the ordinary drink of the people, of malt, cyder and porter. Every spring had been forced. All the muscles of the political body strain'd at once to too violent tension, had started from their places. The price both of materials and of workmanship, had risen so prodigiously, that rival and even vanquished nations, who till then could not withstand the competition of the English, were come the length of supplanting them in all markets, even in their own ports. The whole of the profits which Great-Britain derived from her commerce with every part of the globe could not be estimated at more than two millions and a half; and out of this balance was to be deducted the sum of one million five hundred and sixty thousand pounds, payable to foreigners yearly on fifty two millions which they had in the public funds.

The crisis was difficult and dangerous. The People must get leave to breathe. They could not be relieved by a lessening of the public expences. These were inevitable, whether occasion'd by the view of turning to account, acquisitions purchased by so much blood, so much treasure, or of curbing the resentments of the House of Bourbon irritated to the last degree by the disgrace of the late war, by the sacrifices of the late peace. In the want of every other means of insuring present security, and future prosperity, the idea suggested itself of calling in the Colonies to the succour of the capital, by obliging them to bear a part of it's burthens. A determination apparently founded on incontestable reasons.

An established maxim of all civil societies, and of all ages,

ages, binds on the different members which compose an empire, an obligation to contribute to the expences of it in proportion to their respective abilities. The security of the American Provinces calls for such aids from them as may enable the mother-country to protect them on all occasions. It was to deliver them from tormenting disquietudes, that she engag'd in a war which hath multiplied her debts; they should therefore assist her in bearing or in lessening this additional load. Safe from the enterprizes of a formidable neighbour, now happily for them removed to a distance, can they without injustice refuse to the pressing exigencies of their deliverer, that treasure which the care of their preservation hath cost him? The encouragements which this generous protector gave for a length of time to the rich productions of their soil, the gratuitous advances which he still lavishes to those regions which are not yet cleared; such and so many good and kind offices, are they not intitled to a return of cordial sympathy and essential services?

Such were the considerations which convinced the British government that they had a right to lay internal taxes on the Colonies. They seised the opportunity afforded by the last war, to exhibit a claim so dangerous to liberty. For who ever attends to it must see, that war, whether prosperous or the reverse, furnishes evermore the pretext for the various usurpations of governments; as if the rulers of belligerant nations had it infinitely more at heart to enslave their subjects than to vanquish their enemies. The American Provinces were accordingly ordered to provide the troops sent from the capital for their defence with a part of their necessaries. The dread of interrupting that internal harmony which is so essential in the midst of surrounding enemies, induced them to second the intentions of Parliaments; but with the deep policy of taking no notice of an act, which they could neither reject without exciting civil dis-

sentation, nor acknowledge without endangering rights too precious not to be tenderly cherished. NEW-YORK alone, ventured to refuse all compliance. Though the transgression was venial, she was punished as for obstinate disobedience, by a suspension of her privileges. This blow given to the liberty of one colony ought, one would think, to have excited the clamours of all the others. Whether through want of attention or fore-fight, not one rais'd its voice. Their silence was considered as the result of fear or of voluntary submission. The peace which should have lowered the imposts throughout produced, in 1764, the famous Stamp-act, which laying certain duties on stamp paper prohibited at the same time the use of any other, in any kind of deed or public writing, whether judiciary or extra-judiciary.

The whole of the English Colonies in the new world rose up against this novelty; and their discontent broke out in a very remarkable manner. A kind of conspiracy, perhaps the only kind which is suited to a civilized and of course moderate people, was entered into; a formal agreement amongst all the Colonists to deprive themselves of all sorts of wares manufactured in Great-Britain, till the offensive act should be repealed. This indirect and passive mode of resistance, which should serve as a model to all nations who feel themselves trampled on by the abuse of power, had its effect. The English manufacturers who had scarce any other out-let for their goods, throughout the universe than the national colonies, fell into that despair into which the want of employment must naturally plunge them; and their cries, which government could neither stifle nor elude, made an impression salutary for the colonies. The Stamp-act was repealed after two years of a convulsive agitation, which in the days of fanaticism would have been a civil war.

But

But the triumph of the Colonies was of short duration. Parliament had not retreated without extreme repugnance. It was evident that they had not renounced their claims, when in 1767, by way of equivalent for what the Stamp-act was expected to have produced, they laid a tax on glass, lead, tea, painters-colours, paste-board and paper, exported from England to America. Even those patriots who seemed to carry the supremacy, of the capital over the colonies to the greatest length, could not help condemning a tax, the operation of which must ultimately recoil upon the whole nation, by turning to manufactures those hands which it was her interest to have kept confined to agriculture. The Colonists were as little duped by this innovation as by the former one. In vain was it alledged that government had an indubitable right to lay on exportations what duties they thought proper, while they did not deprive the colonies of the liberty of manufacturing for themselves, such goods as were subject to this new tax. This subterfuge looked like a mockery in regard to a people, who, habituated to tillage alone and restrained from all commerce but with the mother-country, could neither procure by their own labour nor a foreign trade, those necessaries which were sold to them at so high a price. They saw clearly that whether a duty was paid in the old or in the new world, words could not alter the nature of the thing, and that their liberty was equally attacked by an impost on wares which they could not do without, as by a tax on stamp paper which they were compelled to make use of. This enlightened people plainly perceived that government wanted to deceive them, and they did not think it their duty to be imposed on, either by force or cunning. They rightly judged that the most decisive mark of imbecillity and of meanness in a nation, must be the connivance of subjects at the frauds and violences employed by government to corrupt and enslave them.

The

The aversion which they expressed for these new impositions did not arise from their excessive weight, seeing they could not be estimated at more than sixteen-pence a head. This was not an object to startle an immense population, whose public expenditure hath never exceeded one hundred and sixty thousand pounds annually.

It was not the dread of finding themselves in less easy circumstances. The security they derived from the treasons extorted from France; the increase of their trade with the Indians, the extension of their whale, cod, and seal fisheries, the right to cut wood in the bay of Gaspey, the acquisition of sundry Sugar-islands, the greater facility of carrying on an illicit intercourse with the Spanish settlements, to which they were become nearer neighbours; so many inlets of wealth were ample compensation for that trifle of revenue which government wish'd to draw from them.

It was not an apprehension that the colonies would be drained of what little specie remained in circulation among them. The pay of eight thousand four hundred Regulars, which the capital maintains in North-America, must bring in more cash than this tax could possibly carry out.

It was not an indifference for the parent-state. The colonies, so far from being ungratefully had evidenced such zeal for her interests during the last war, that Parliament from a principle of equity, remitted them very considerable sums, by way of restitution or indemnification. Nor was it in fine, an ignorance of the duty which subjects owe, or of the obligations which they stand under to government. Had the colonies not thought themselves bound to contribute to the liquidation of the national debt, though perhaps they had occasioned the greatest part of it, they knew very well that they were bound to contribute.

contribute to the expences of the navy, to the maintenance of the different establishments in Africa and America, in a word to all those common charges which had relation to their safety and prosperity, as well as to those of the mother-country.

If the new world refused to succour the old, it was because that was exacted which it would have been sufficient to have asked ; because that must be held on the footing of her obedience, which should have only been solicited from her liberty. Her non-compliance was not caprice, but just jealousy of her rights. Rights which should not, cannot be contested.

During the course of two centuries that the English have had settlements in North America, their country hath sustained many expensive and bloody wars, hath been disturbed by enterprising and tumultuous Parliaments, hath been governed by daring and corrupt ministers, ever ready to exalt the dignity and prerogative of the throne, on the ruin of the rights and privileges of the people. Yet, ambition, avarice, factions, tyranny, all of them in their turns have recognized, all have respected the liberty which the colonies enjoyed of laying on themselves every tax for the purpose of creating a revenue.

A solemn contract supported this prerogative so natural in itself, and so conformable to the fundamental end of all reasonable association. The colonies might appeal to the charters of their establishments which empower them to tax themselves in the manner most convenient for them. These compacts, it is true, were nothing more than conventions with the crown; but even allowing that the King had exceeded his powers by grants from which, most certainly, he derived no private emolument, doth not a long possession, tacitly avowed and recognized by the silence of Parliament, form a legal prescription?

The

The Provinces of the new world have titles still more authentic in their favour. They insist that an English subject, no matter which hemisphere he dwells in, is not to contribute to the charges of the state but by his own consent, given by himself in person, or by his representatives. It was to defend this sacred privilege, that the nation hath so often deluged her fields with her own blood, that she hath dethroned her Kings, that she hath excited or braved storms without number. Can she deny to two millions of her children a blessing which hath cost her so dear, which perhaps is the sole basis of her independence?

In opposition to the colonies it is urged that Catholics living in England, are excluded from the right of voting, and that their lands are subjected to a double tax. But why, they answer, do the Papists refuse to take that oath of allegiance which the state requires? rendered by this suspected, the distrust which they inspire justifies the rigour which they experience. Why do they not abjure a religion so contrary in its principles to the free constitution of their country, so cruelly favourable to the pretensions of despotism, to the encroachments of royalty on the rights of the people? Why this blind and obstinate attachment to a church hostile to all others? They well deserve the penalties which the government that consents to tolerate them, thinks fit to lay such intolerant subjects under. But the inhabitants of the new world would be punished without having committed an offence, if they must cease to be Americans before they can be considered as citizens of the empire.

With some effrontery these faithful Colonies have been told, that England nourishes in her bosom a multitude of subjects that have no representatives, because they have not that extent of property which is requisite to qualify them as voters for members of Parliament.

On

On what grounds do they pretend to privileges greater than what the citizens of the parent-country enjoy? No, reply the Colonies, we ask not a superiority, we only claim an equality with our brethren. In Great-Britain, the man who possesseth a freehold of forty shillings a year hath a voice in taxation; and he who owns in America, immense tracts, shall not have the same prerogative? No, what is an exception to the law, a derogation from the general rule in the Capital, should not be a fundamental constitution for the Colonies. Let the English, who wish to deprive the provinces of the western world of the exclusive right of taxation, suppose for a moment the House of Commons, no longer the creature of their choice, to be nothing more than an hereditary and permanent tribunal, or one arbitrarily appointed by the King; if a body thus constituted could levy money on the nation at large, without consulting the public opinion or asking the general consent, must not the English, on such a supposition, own themselves to be as complete slaves as their neighbours? Yet five hundred men in the midst of seven millions of fellow-subjects, would probably be kept within the bounds of moderation, if not by a principle of equity, by the well-founded dread of the public indignation, which pursues the oppressors of a people even beyond the tomb. But the lot of the Americans, taxed at the discretion of the senate of the capital, would be hopeless and forlorn indeed. Too remote to be heard, they would be crushed by heavy imposts without the least attention to their complaints. Even the tyranny which crushed them would be decorated with the fair name of Patriotism. Under the pretext of relieving the mother-country, the Colonies would be loaded with impunity.

This frightful prospect will never allow them to part with the exclusive right of taxing themselves. While they continue to regulate the public revenue, their inter-

terests must be respected, or should their rights be at any time infringed, they will obtain a speedy redress of their grievances. But their remonstrances will lose all their efficacy with government, when they are no longer backed by the right of granting or refusing their money to the exigencies of the state. The power which hath usurped the right of fixing the imposts, will easily usurp that of administering them. Sole judge of the levy it will become the arbiter of the expenditure; and funds destined, in appearance, to the safety of the people, will be employed to enslave them. Such hath ever been the solemn pace of empires. No civil community hath preserved even a shadaw of liberty, when it hath once lost the privilege of voting in the sanction and promulgation of revenue laws. A nation is for ever a slave, when it no longer boasts an assembly or body of men, vested with power to defend its rights against the encroachments of the authority which governs it.

The provinces of English America have every thing to fear with respect to their independence. Their unsuspecting confidence may betray them, may deliver them up bound into the hands of the mother-country. They are inhabited by an infinity of plain and honest people. They do not even suspect that those men who hold the reins of an empire, may be carried away by passions unjust and tyrannical. Their old country they suppose under the influence of no other than those maternal sentiments, which accord so well with her true interests, with that love and veneration they entertain for her. With the blindness of these upright citizens, who indulge so pleasing an illusion, coincides the silence of those who think they should not disturb their tranquility, on account of some light and trivial imposts. These indolent men do not discern that it was meant, at first, to lull their vigilance to repose by the smallness of the imposition; that England only seeks an example of submission

submission, to found a title on in future; that if Parliament can levy one shilling, it may one hundred thousand; and that there can be no better reason for limiting this claim hereafter, than their is now for resisting it. But a class of men, the most pernicious to liberty, are those ambitious people who, disuniting their happiness from that of the public and of posterity, burn with a desire to augment their credit, their rank, and their riches. The British ministry, from which these miscreants have obtained or expect advancement, finds them always ready to promote their detestable schemes, by the contagion of their luxury and of their vices, by the craft of their insinuations, by the insidious pliancy of their manners and address.

Let the genuine patriots then struggle, with unremitting firmness, against prejudice, indolence, seduction; and let them not despair of coming victorious out of a conflict in which their virtue hath engaged them. It may perhaps be attempted to lure their integrity, by the specious offer of admitting to Parliament the Deputies of America, to regulate, in conjunction with those of the capital, the national supplies. And in truth, such are the extent, the population, the exportations, in a word the importance of the colonies, that the legislature of the empire cannot possibly superintend them with sufficient wisdom and security, without being enlightened by the details, and assisted by the counsels of their representatives. But let the Americans beware how they empower such deputies to decide, with respect to the property or the contributions of their constituents. Their voices, feeble and few, would easily be overpowered by the multitude of the British representatives; and the Provinces, of which they were the organ, would find themselves loaded in consequence of this clashing of interests and of votes, with a share of the common burthens, grievous and unequal. The right

of fixing, of apportioning, and of levying their taxes, should, therefore, reside exclusively in the provincial assemblies of the new world. They ought to be peculiarly jealous of this essential right at this time, that the facility of depriving them of it, seems to have been augmented by the conquests of the last war.

The parent-country hath derived from her new acquisitions, the advantage of extending her fisheries and of encreasing her connections with the savage natives. Yet, as if all this were nothing in her eyes, she is incessantly repeating it, that she had no other view in this enlargement of possession and derives no other benefit from it, than the giving stability to the peace and security of the colonies. The colonies, on the other hand, contend that their lands, on which their wealth intirely depended, have sunk considerably in their value since this immense extension of territory; that their population diminishing, or not advancing, their country must be more exposed to the ravages of invasion; that their provinces have found a formidable rival, the more northern ones in Canada, those to the southward in the Floridas. The Colonists enlightened, with regard to future times, by the history of the past, even insist that the military government established in the new conquests, that the numerous troops dispersed through them, that the forts constructed in them threaten, one day, to fasten chains on countries which have flourished, which have prospered but by the influence of liberty.

Great-Britain enjoys in her Colonies all that authority which she should desire. She hath a negative on all the laws which they enact. The whole of the executive power is in the hands of those to whom she delegates it. An appeal lies to her tribunal in all civil causes. It is her sovereign will that decides with respect to all commercial intercourses which the Colonists are permitted to form and keep up. To hang weights on the yoke

yoke of a domination so wisely combined, would be to plunge again a new continent into a chaos, from which it hath with difficulty emerged by the efforts of two ages of unremitting labour; it would be to compel the sons of toil, who have clear'd and cultivated it, to arm themselves in defence of those sacred rights which they hold equally by nature's charter and by social compacts. The people of England—that people so passionately fond of liberty, as on some occasions to have protected it in regions remote from their climate and unknown to their interests, shall they abandon those sentiments which their glory, their virtue, their instinct, their safety, render it their eternal duty to adhere to? Can they so far betray those rights which are so dear to them, as to aim at reducing their brethren and their children to slavery? Should factious spirits however form so deadly a conspiracy, and in an hour of madness and intoxication, prevail on the mother-country to adopt it; what ought the resolutions of the colonies to be, to save themselves from falling into the most detestable dependence?

Previous to their throwing their eyes forward to this subversion of the political system, let them revolve in their thoughts all the benefits which they derive from their original country. England hath ever been to them an out-work of defence against the potent nations of Europe. She hath serv'd them as a guide and a governor, to prevent or to heal those civil dissensions, which mutual jealousy and emulation are too apt to excite amongst infant colonies growing up in each other's neighbourhood. To the influence of her excellent constitution are they indebted for that peace and prosperity which they enjoy. While the colonies continue to live under a rule so salutary and so gentle, they must go on progressively in that boundless career, which the vigour of their industry will stretch even to the remotest deserts.

Let their love of the parent-country however be attended

tended with a certain jealousy respecting their own liberty. Let their rights be continually examined, explained, discussed; let them accustom themselves to cherish such who, on every occasion, remind them of these rights, as their best citizens. This restless and anxious spirit becomes all free states; but it is indispensable in complicated constitutions, where freedom is mingled with a certain degree of subordination, such as naturally results from a connection between countries separated by an immense ocean. This vigilance must prove the surest guardian of that union, which should bind inseparably the mother-country and her colonies together.

Should administration, forever composed of ambitious men, even in the freest states, attempt to augment the power of the crown, or the opulence of the capital, at the expence of the colonies, they should oppose an invincible resistance to such usurpation. Every encroachment of government repel'd by vigorous remonstrances, is almost constantly check'd; while those grievances, the redress of which the people have not the courage to insist on, are uniformly followed by new oppressions. Nations in general are more formed to feel than to think; they have no other idea of the legality of a power than the very exercise of it. Habituated to implicit obedience, the most of them become familiarised to the harshness of their particular governments; and ignorant of the true origin or object of civil society, they have no conception of the limits of authority. Above all, in states where the principles of legislation are confounded with those of religion, even as one extravagant tenet, is sufficient to introduce a thousand other to minds already deceived, so the first encroachment of government opens a door to every succeeding one. Who believes the most, believes the least; who can do the most can do the least; it is by this double abuse of credulity and of power that

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all the absurdities and iniquities in matters of religion and of politics, have crept into the world to debase and crush mankind; happily that spirit of toleration and of liberty which hath hitherto reigned in the English colonies, hath preserved them from this extremity of weakness and of misery. They feel the dignity of human nature sufficiently to resist oppression, were it at the hazard of their lives.

This enlightened people know very well that violent measures and the last appeal can only be justified, when every gentle means of conciliation hath been tried in vain. They know also, that reduced to the dire alternative of slavery or civil war, if they must take up arms in defence of liberty, it is their duty to avoid tarrying so fair a cause by the horrors and barbarities which are the attendants of sedition; and that with the determined purpose of never sheathing the sword till they have recovered their rights, they should deem the re-establishment of their original their constitutional independence, a sufficient fruit of their victory.

And in fact we should be cautious how we confound that resistance which the English colonies ought to oppose to the mother-country, with the fury of a people driven by a lasting and intolerable oppression to revolt against their sovereign. When once the slave of despotism hath burst his chains asunder, hath committed his fate to the decision of the sword, he is obliged to massacre his tyrant, to exterminate his race and his posterity, to change the form of that government of which he had been the victim through successive ages. If he durst not do all this, sooner or later he would be punished for possessing but a half-courage. The yoke would fall back upon his head with additional force and pressure; and the feigned moderation of his tyrants would prove but a new toil in which he would find himself caught and entangled forever. Such is the curse of factions

factions in an absolute government, that neither prince nor people can know any bounds in their resentment, because they have not known any in the exercise of authority. But a well poised constitution, like that of the English colonies, carries in its principles and the limitations of its different powers, a preservative and antidote against the evils of anarchy. When ever the mother country hath removed the ground of their complaints, by re-establishing them in their original situation, they should rest contented, that being, on the whole, the happiest to which a wise people could justly aspire.

They could not embrace a system of absolute independence without bursting the bands of religion, of oaths, of laws, of language, of blood, of interest, of commerce, of all those habitudes, in fine, which hold them united among themselves, under the peaceful influence of their common parent. Who sees not, that such rending to pieces must reach the entrails, the heart, the very life of the colonies? Should they have the good fortune to escape the fatal extremity of civil wars, would it be an easy matter for them to agree on a new form of government? Was every colony to become a distinct and separate state, what endless divisions amongst them? One may judge of the reciprocal enmities which would originate from such a separation, by the fate of all societies bordering on each other. Should such a number of little common-wealths, where the diversity of laws, the inequality of riches, the variety of possessions must sow, in secret, the seeds of an opposition in interests, be disposed to form a confederated union, how adjust the rank which each should hold in it, and the influence which each shoule possess, in proportion to their respective risks and importance? Jealousy, and a hundred other passions, which so early divided the wise states of Greece, would not these spread discord through a multitude of colonies, rather associated

ited by resentment and indignation, which are but transitory and galling ties, than by the sober well-weighed principles of a natural and permanent union? All these considerations seem to evince, that an eternal divorce from the capital would be a great and grievous misfortune to the English colonies.

One may go a little farther, and assert, that were it in the power of the European nations who reign in the new world to bring about this great revolution, it would not be their interest to wish it. This may be a paradox, perhaps, in the eyes of those states who see their colonies continually menaced by an invasion at their doors. They conclude, no doubt, that if England was not so strong in America, they would there enjoy in peace, those riches, which the envies and often ravishes from them. It cannot be denied that England derives the influence she is mistress of, especially in the new world, from the extent and population of her northern colonies. It is they who put it in her power to attack at all times, with advantage, the isles and the continent of other nations, to conquer their lands or to ruin their commerce. But let it be considered that this crown hath, in the other quarters of the globe, interests which may run counter to her progress in America, which may hamper or retard her enterprizes there, which may annihilate her conquests by the necessity of restitutions.

Cut the knot which ties old Britain to the new; soon would the northern colonies alone possess more force than they have now united to the mother-country. This vast continent set loose from every convention in Europe would enjoy the liberty, the command of all her own movements. It would then become a measure of equal importance and facility for her to seize those lands whose treasures might supply what the mediocrity of her own productions denies her. Her independent position would enable her to complete the preparations for invasion,

before the rumour of them could reach our climates. Her warlike operations would be conducted with an energy peculiar to new societies. She might chase her enemy, the field, and the moment of her victories. Her thunder would always discharge itself on coasts where it was least expected, on seas but feebly guarded by distant states. Those countries, for the defence of which forces were sent over, would be conquered before they could be succoured. They could neither be recovered by treaties without great sacrifices, nor prevented from falling again under that yoke from which an enfeebled hand had delivered them. The colonies of our absolute monarchies would hasten, perhaps, to acknowledge a master, who could offer them no condition so vexatious as that of their own government; or else, animated by the example of the English provinces, they would break the chain which fastens them so shamefully to Europe.

Let nothing then induce the rival nations of England to precipitate by their secret counsels, or by clandestine succours, a revolution which can only deliver them from a neighbouring enemy, by giving them at a distance one much more formidable. Why accelerate an event which must one day fall out from the inevitable concurrence of so many others? for it would be against the nature of things, that provinces subordinate to the dominant nation should remain under her empire, after they have risen to an equality in population and in opulence. Thus every thing conspires to that great dismembering, the precise moment of which it is not given us to foresee. Every thing leads to it, the progress of good in the new hemisphere, and the progress of evil in the old.

Alas! the prompt and rapid decline of our morals and our strength, the crimes of kings and the calamities of the people, must render even universal that fatal catastrophe which is to disunite one world from the other. The mine is already prepared under the foundations of our

our tottering empires ; the materials of their destruction are made up and accumulated of the ruins of our laws, of the collision and fermentation of our opinions, of the subversion of our rights which supported our courage, of the luxury of our courts, and of the misery of our fields, of the inexpiable hatred which for ever subsists between the feeble, the heartless and unworthy, who possess all the wealth, and those robust, nay virtuous men, who have no longer any thing to lose but their lives. In proportion as the nations of Europe mutually weaken and sink under each other, population and agriculture advance in America : the arts transplanted by us take root there and will speedily flourish ; that vast country starting out of nothing burns to figure in its turn on the face of the globe and in the annals of the world. O posterity, perhaps thou shall be more fortunate than thy wretched and despicable fathers ! may this last wish be accomplished, and console the expiring generation with the hope of better successors.

To my Friends in Boston

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